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Pro and Con

Take the Wraps Off CIA

YES—"Deal with the world as it is and not as we'd like it to be"



Interview With
Senator
Walter D. Huddleston

Democrat,
Of Kentucky

Q Senator Huddleston, why do you favor easing the restrictions on covert operations by the CIA?

A The CIA now has to report on its activities to eight congressional committees—four in the House and four in the Senate. This has a chilling effect on the CIA when it plans covert activities—particularly when the secret operations of other countries also are involved. The intelligence agencies of some countries are afraid to cooperate with the CIA when they know that so many congressional-committee members are going to be told about their plans.

Let me emphasize, however, that we should enter into covert activities with a great deal of caution. They should not be approved except in extraordinary circumstances. And before we begin covert operations, we must be assured that we have fully assessed all the risks and dangers involved.

Q Some people believe that cloak-and-dagger operations designed to topple foreign governments or assassinate political figures abroad have no place in the foreign policy of a democracy—

A I can understand that feeling, but we simply have to deal with the world as it is and not as we'd like it to be. There are times when it's to our advantage—and to the advantage of the countries we're dealing with—to engage in covert operations. I would bar assassinations.

Q What other changes in the laws governing the CIA do you propose?

A The Hughes-Ryan amendment to the 1974 Foreign Aid Authorization Act, which requires the CIA to report to eight congressional committees, should be modified. Reporting to only two committees—the intelligence committees of the House and Senate—would be enough. These committees have established acceptable security standards. They have provisions whereby they can relay secret information to other committees that have a need to know it.

Also, I would want the President personally to review and authorize any covert activities of a large scope. There might be instances in which the President could approve categories of operation, and then the National Security Council could determine the specific projects to undertake.

Q If restrictions on the CIA are eased, is there a danger of recurrence of questionable CIA adventures?

A One thing that would militate against that is this: The intelligence committees would continue to have an opportunity to see virtually all the information the CIA has.

NO—"No agency of government should be removed from accountability"



Interview With
Representative
Ted Weiss

Democrat,
Of New York

Q Representative Weiss, why do you oppose easing congressional restrictions on covert operations of the CIA?

A We now know that our intelligence agencies have gone far beyond their legitimate function of gathering intelligence in recent years. When they do, not only do we end up subverting the governments of other countries, but we run a very serious risk of subverting our own democratic process. That's exactly what happened during the Nixon era. To go back to that kind of situation would be a grave mistake from a national, democratic, constitutional point of view.

Q Critics say that the requirement that six congressional committees, in addition to the intelligence committees of the Senate and House, be notified of the CIA's covert operations makes leaks to the press almost inevitable and covert operations almost impossible to conduct—

A I'm not for leaks. But this is a misplaced concern. Members of Congress, on the basis of their record, cannot be accused of not keeping CIA information confidential. I'm much more concerned that we not start building walls of secrecy between the people and those who govern, and between the CIA and Congress.

When House committees other than the Intelligence Committee consider secret CIA matters, any member of Congress can be present. But the Intelligence Committee can refuse to permit other members of Congress to sit in on its sessions. This makes some members of Congress more equal than others, and is a very dangerous trend.

Q Then you oppose proposals to restrict CIA reporting to the intelligence committees of the Senate and House?

A I do. Or, if the number of committees hearing CIA reports is to be reduced, nonmembers of the House Intelligence Committee should be allowed to attend intelligence-committee sessions.

Q Wouldn't that be a hindrance to the operations of the CIA?

A No. The fact is that not only is the CIA trying to reduce the numbers of committees which have access to CIA information, but it wants to limit entirely the disclosure to Congress of plans for covert CIA operations—no matter how many committees are involved.

Under the pressure or the guise of international tension, the CIA wants to go back to doing business as it did before the Congress and the American public and press called the CIA to account. That would be a very serious and mistaken